

How iPads can help people living with dementia: a summary

A study by the University of Worcester, working with Anchor



Setting the scene

There is growing interest in the use of touchscreen technology in care settings in general and particularly for residents who are living with dementia. Tablets are being employed in support of a range of activities including reminiscence, communication, cognitive stimulation and social interaction. One common approach is to encourage digital interaction with creative activities such as visual arts, listening to music and solving puzzles. The majority of these initiatives have the broad aim of increasing wellbeing and quality of life for residents and staff, and there is a considerable body of anecdotal evidence to suggest that they are often effective.

However, there has been a dearth of systematic approaches to introducing and using touchscreen technology in care settings, as well as a lack of evidence-based analysis of the benefits. It is in this context that Anchor, the largest not-for-profit provider of housing and care for older people in England, embarked on an innovative project to introduce iPads into all of its care homes, supported by a training package for the Activity Co-ordinators who lead on this work.

About Activity Co-ordinators

Activity Co-ordinators play a vital role to enhance the health, happiness and wellbeing of residents at each Anchor care home. Activity Co-ordinators arrange a variety of events and activities to enjoy in the care home and in the local community. These range from day trips to leisure facilities and places of interest, to arts, crafts, games and social events.

“.....
“This is the first time we’ve seen iPads introduced within care settings in this kind of comprehensive, considered way and at this scale. If used in the right way iPads can make a big difference to people living with dementia. This represents an innovative and significant step in understanding the role technology plays in improving quality of life and wellbeing.”

Dr Simon Evans,
Principal Research Fellow, University of Worcester

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The Evaluation

The Association for Dementia Studies, a centre of excellence in research and education at the University of Worcester, was commissioned to conduct an independent evaluation of Anchor's iPad project. This is the largest study of its kind to focus on the use of touchscreen technology for people living with dementia in care homes. The evaluation methodology included a survey of Activity Co-ordinators working in all Anchor care homes and a series of case studies based on observations of iPad sessions and interviews with staff and relatives.

The evaluation findings highlight the substantial potential of iPads as a tool to enhance the quality of life of older people living in care homes, and particularly those living with dementia.

The iPads are an accessible and flexible resource that can be used in both group work and one-to-one interactions. Well trained and supported Activity Co-ordinators are central to the success of this approach, using their extensive knowledge, skills and experience to provide person-centred care for residents with a range of abilities and preferences.

Case Study: Enhancing quality of life for residents

Music was known to be beneficial for one resident in terms of improving their mood, "especially if she's a bit down". Engagement through music can be enhanced by the iPad as it makes it easier for the Activity Co-ordinator to personalise the music choices or respond rapidly to requests from the resident.

When one resident became agitated and wanted to return to their previous home, the Activity Co-ordinator was able to use the iPad to look up where the resident had lived and show them pictures of their house and surrounding area. This helped to settle the resident and triggered conversations and positive memories.



Anchor is pioneering the use of modern technology in its care homes

Exploring the use and impact of iPads

The evaluation provides strong evidence for the considerable benefits of using iPads in care homes. Overall, they complement and enhance existing activities for people living with dementia, as well as supporting the introduction of new activities based on the growing range of apps that are available. Positive outcomes include increased interaction, greater inclusion and improved communication with relatives. A range of benefits were also seen for the care home and care staff including the delivery of enhanced activities, further opportunities for a person-centred approach and increased skills and confidence.

The evaluation provides a clear picture of how iPads are used in care homes:

- **Enhancing activities:** In 98% of cases, iPad-related activities were additional sessions or incorporated into existing activity sessions, rather than replacing 'traditional' activities. This suggests that the iPads are helping to enhance activities and further enrich residents' lives rather than simply digitising what homes were already providing.
- **Planned and impromptu use:** 71% of Activity Co-ordinators used the iPads as part of planned activity sessions, while 52% used them in a more impromptu fashion.
- **Engaging with residents:** 56% of Activity Co-ordinators were able to involve a total of more than ten residents in iPad activities.
- **Range of activities:** The iPads were used for a wide range of activities, with playing music or songs being the most common. Games were also quite popular, including bingo, jigsaws, crosswords and quizzes.
- **Engaging families:** 46% of Activity Co-ordinators involved family members in the use of iPads.

Case Study: Triggering positive memories

An Activity Co-ordinator was talking to a resident and their relative when they mentioned where they used to go on holiday in years gone by. The Activity Co-ordinator was able to use the iPad to quickly find images of the holiday destination from the relevant period, which triggered more memories for both the resident and their relative.

“ There is lots of evidence to prove that iPads help residents living with dementia. Day-to-day we see the difference in each individual which in turn, improves their quality of life. ”

Leanne,
Activities Co-ordinator, Anchor

The iPad project impacted on residents, relatives and staff in multiple ways, including:

- The use of iPads increased fivefold in the care homes that took part.
- Activity Co-ordinators reported that the project changed their attitudes towards using technology and enabled them to offer residents more personalised activities.
- iPad based activities can promote interaction between residents with a range of abilities and preferences.
- iPads facilitated discussions and triggered residents' memories, particularly through the capacity to rapidly search the internet for images and songs as conversations develop.
- The video calling software (Skype / Facetime) offered by the iPad enabled residents to stay in touch with relatives, including those who lived abroad.

Case Study: Engaging with families

The Activity Co-ordinator in one home was able to fulfil the final wish of one resident by setting up a video call on the iPad. The resident "got to see his daughter and grandchild" two days before he passed away.



**iPads introduced into 75%
of Anchor care homes**

Sharing good practice

Drawing on the lessons learnt through this project, the following guidelines are offered to support the implementation of similar initiatives for people living with dementia in care homes and other settings.

Adopt a person-centred approach, taking account of individual abilities and preferences.

- People require varying levels of support in using an iPad, depending on their abilities and previous experience with technology.
- Like most of us, some people with dementia are more active and alert at particular times of day.
- Take into account individual preferences for one to one work and group sessions.

Take advantage of the iPad's flexibility when planning activities.

- iPads can be used to enhance existing activities, such as reminiscence sessions, as well as introducing entirely new ones.
- Some activities benefit from access to online information (for example, visual images to encourage reminiscence) while others are based on apps installed on the iPad. Using a combination of both in any one session can help maintain interest and engagement.
- iPads can be used as part of activity sessions as well as during more impromptu interactions.



**Use of iPads
increased fivefold**

Think about involving relatives in the use of iPads.

- iPads can support communication between residents and relatives. For example, they can be used to look at photographs together and discuss people and places. They also help residents to keep in touch with relatives and friends through the use of video calling apps such as FaceTime and Skype.
- Relatives can be a useful source of information about preferences and previous experience with technology.
- Relatives can be supported to use their own iPads as part of their regular contact with residents.

Train and support staff to ensure confident and successful use of iPads in care homes.

- Develop a consistent training approach across all care homes to maximise successful implementation of iPads and allow the creation of standard resources for widespread use.
- Don't forget to include practical information as part of effective training, such as how to update the iPad operating system, finding and installing new apps and adjusting iPad settings to maximise their usability for people living with dementia. This might mean changing the font size or increasing the contrast of the display.
- Encourage the wider staff team to become familiar with iPads and engage with planned sessions to increase the opportunities for all staff to deliver impromptu activities. A peer support network for staff using iPads can be an effective way of promoting continued good practice and encourage the sharing of best practice.

“The iPad has had a massive impact on our residents, it's decreased their anxiety, and it's improved their happiness.”

Emma,
Care Manager, Anchor

Get the infrastructure in place before the iPads arrive to support a smooth roll-out.

- Think about how many tablets will be required in a home in order to allow widespread use.
- A stable Wi-Fi/broadband network is required for iPads to be used to their maximum effect.
- Additional equipment can enhance the use of iPads, such as the capacity to connect to a television in order to enlarge images.

Case Study: using iPads to enhance activities

Paper version – An Activity Co-ordinator ran a Pictionary session with a group of residents using a flip chart and pens. Although it worked to some extent the session was difficult to facilitate for various reasons. Mobility issues meant that the flip chart had to be moved between residents for them draw on. Most residents did small drawings in a corner of the page which were difficult to see. The drawing then had to be passed around for everyone to look at, making it tricky to get people joining in and keep them engaged.

iPad version – In a session that was observed as part of the evaluation, an Activity Co-ordinator connected the iPad to a television using a long cable. This meant that it was possible to pass the iPad between residents without the need for anyone to move, and everyone was able to see the pictures on a large screen as they were being drawn. This resulted in a much more engaging session with greater involvement from all residents.



Conclusion

With an ageing population and a rapid increase in the number of people living with dementia, there is a growing recognition of the potential for technology to be embedded across all aspects of care, including care homes. The Anchor iPad project explores this and represents an excellent foundation for the future. Well planned and executed, the phased approach adopted by Anchor has enabled learning to be integrated into the project in a continuous and sustainable way. The evaluation of the project indicates that the iPad can provide an effective and innovative way of engaging with individual residents and groups of residents with a mix of abilities and preferences.

This study has allowed the University of Worcester, working with Anchor, to evaluate the impact and benefits of adopting a systematic approach to using iPads in a care homes, backed by comprehensive training and support for staff. Building on anecdotal evidence, the findings clearly demonstrate that, with the right approach, iPads can enhance quality of life for people living with dementia.

iPads provide a flexible and adaptable means of engaging with residents and their relatives, in both one to one and group sessions. The iPads bring the potential to increase levels of social interaction and engagement, as well as helping to reduce agitation and increase enjoyment for people living with dementia. The evaluation indicates that this type of touchscreen technology can enhance and complement the provision of activities in care homes while also enabling a more person-centred approach to supporting residents.

The learning that has emerged from this project provides valuable insight into how this kind of technology can be used in care settings with positive results. This project provides an excellent example of how the care sector can explore innovative ways to improve the quality of life of people living with dementia.

“Introducing iPads across our care homes has allowed us to explore an even greater range and breadth of ways for carers and families to connect with people living with dementia and ensure they get the most out of life.”

Joanne Laverty,
Dementia Specialist, Anchor



About Anchor

Anchor is England's largest not-for-profit provider of housing and care for the over 55s. Working with almost 40,000 older people each week, our aim is very simple – to help people get the best out of life.

With a reputation built on more than 45 years' experience, we're passionate about offering older people a vast choice of great places and ways to live.

If you would like further information on Anchor's range of services our Customer Centre is on hand to answer your questions.

About Anchor Inspires

Anchor Inspires is our innovative model of truly person-centred care for people living with dementia. It sets out the highest quality and standards of dementia care. Built on best practice from around the world and based on the principles of person-centred care it makes it possible for people living with dementia to continue to do the things they love in a caring, supportive environment.

Understanding residents' backgrounds, interests and personal tastes is an essential first step in the approach we take to enhancing their lives – so that from their very first day living with us, they see it as their home.

Call: **0345 140 2020**
www.anchor.org.uk

Anchor is England's largest not-for-profit provider of older people's housing and care.

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